

two and no more. But it was enough to give me a view of the interior.

What I saw there caused me to hold my breath for a moment. A bed stood directly in front of me. On the far side of the bed I saw a man, fully dressed all but his shoes. He was rather a neutral-tinted man, of rather meager proportions, but I soon lost all interest in his mere appearance, since his activities proved even more interesting. He was engaged in a movement which for a second or two I couldn't understand. I saw him cross softly to a white-topped dresser and from it take up a bronze alcohol lamp. I could see him carefully draw back the coverings, exposing the end of the heavy hair mattress. Then over the end of this mattress he inverted his alcohol lamp, watching the fluid intently as it ran down in a scattering little torrent and soaked into the padded fabric.

At the same moment that he struck this match by rubbing it along his trouser leg I reached for my automatic and continued to push the door noiselessly open. He did not hear my advance, as I stepped into the room, for he was stooping low and watching the flame of the match end.

"Wait!"

I said it as short and stern as I was able to bark out that single word.

He waited all right.

"Put up your hands," I told him. He at once raised his hands above his shoulders, with the palms facing me. But, instead of watching me, he was watching my automatic.

"Where's Curate Sam?" I asked him, as calmly as I could.

"I dunno any guy by that name," was his altogether unsatisfactory remonstrance.

"Oh, yes, you do," I announced, stepping a little closer to him.

"You talk, or this does!" I announced to him.

"Aw, lady, you wouldn't do that," he said, in a sort of wheedling plaintiveness. And as I looked at him I made a discovery. His blinking eyes weren't directed on me, as he stood there. They were staring past me. Then, before I could turn, a long arm was suddenly crooked about my neck, jerking my head up and back, at the same moment that a sinewy hand struck at my right forearm and brought my pistol sharply down against my side, pinning it there before I could even understand what it all meant. At that the man against the wall darted forward and jerked the firearm from my fingers.

I was still unable to see my captor. But the moment I heard his voice I knew it was Curate Sam.

"Shut the door," he said in a sharp whisper. At the same moment his liberated right hand closed on my mouth, for instinct had told him, I suppose, that I was gathering my strength for one long scream.

The smaller man in blue serge seemed to understand just what was expected of him, for without being told to do so he busied himself in tearing a hand towel into strips and knotting it up in a gag. I could see him hand that gag to Curate Sam. Then he twisted me about, jerked my two hands behind my waist and tied them there with more strands of towel.

"What're you goin' to do wit' her?" inquired the smaller man, an impersonally as though he was inquiring as to the disposal of a market fowl.

"I'm going to cook her goose for her," announced Curate Sam, as he half flung and half pushed me face down on the bed, rolled me over, and before I was quite aware of what he

was doing he had me tied there to the bed. Then he picked up the bronze alcohol lamp and shook it. He seemed disappointed to find it empty.

"Any more of this stuff 'round here?" he demanded of the smaller man.

That smaller man didn't answer him in words. But he sided quickly and cautiously through a door, opening into what must have been a bathroom, and a moment later returned with a quart bottle of what I assumed to be alcohol.

Alcohol, I remembered, burned with a very hot flame. It would begin at my feet and burn upward. It would be—

"D'you want to live?" he dispassionately inquired.

I did want to live. But beyond a frantic nodding of the head I had no means of conveying this information to Curate Sam.

"Then come down and open that wall safe," he told me as he took out a pocketknife and with his left hand began clumsily cutting away the strands of toweling hurting my ankles. The sawed-off revolver, all the while, was balanced in his right hand. When I made a sign for him to take that odious gag out of my mouth, for by this time I felt like a patient who'd been a half day in a dentist's chair, he merely emitted a sniff of scorn.

"Not on your life!" he announced with calm conviction as he reached in under his coat and took out a pocket flashlight. "You're going to do this the way I say. You're going to walk ahead of me to the room where that wall safe is. When I need to, I'll show a light. But whether it's light or dark, it'll pay you to remember that this gun of mine is within three feet of your ribs. You get that?"

There was no choice left to me. What he told me to do I was compelled to do.

"Now get into that safe," was his cut command, "and by the back way." I knew better than to cross him. So I turned and walked steadily toward the door, with Curate Sam three paces behind me, his flashlight in one hand and his revolver in the other. My captor, however, cut any hesitation short by flashing his searchlight ahead of me and catching me by the arm. Thus holding me, he piloted me on through the darkness, over polished hardwood floors and cushioned rugs, until we came to a door which he opened with the utmost caution. He pushed me through this door, closed it after him, and felt along the wall for a light switch.

The moment the light was on he dropped his hand from my arm. I edged away until his curtly warning gesture brought me to a stop. As I had surmised, he ventured a survey of the room.

I was still afraid of that extraordinary little mechanism of steel and nickel which at the twitch of a finger could spit death into my body. And if you are in doubt as to the disturbing features of this, some idle midnight put a six-shooter into the hand of your best friend—a loaded six-shooter—and request him to point it directly at you for five or ten minutes. Merely try it. The operation, you will find, may involve slightly more tension than you imagine.

But picture that same fully loaded six-shooter, not in the hands of a friend, but in the hands of an enemy, and an enemy who had already proved himself to be a virulent one, as audacious as he was determined, as evil as he was crafty. Picture him there, as

complete master of the situation, standing ready to give that fatal finger twitch at the first movement from me which in any way threatened his safety. Then perhaps you will understand why, when Curate Sam commanded me to cross to that wall safe and open it, I meekly stepped across the room and prepared to carry out his orders.

Luckily, I knew the combination of that lock, and armed with this information, there would be no difficulty in opening it. I also knew that the treasure which he expected to find within that safe would not be there. What he would do when this discovery was made I could only surmise. But there were other things that I remembered. Every moment of time that I gained, I knew, was to my advantage. There were other people in that house, and already the alarm of burglary had been sounded. Ferrie himself must be doing something. And word had surely been passed on to Winkie. And at the darkest moment, I argued, help might come, help must come.

"You're not trying to open that safe," he announced in a tone of voice which was disturbing in its quietness. To answer him was out of the question. But I turned and looked protestingly out from under my improvised canopy. I stared at him over my shoulder, not only to let him know that I was still there in my helplessness, but also to make sure of his position.

At almost the same moment I caught the hum, low and muffled through the closed windows, of a motor-car engine somewhere outside in the grounds. My captor straightened up at that sound, listening intently. Then he wheeled suddenly about, with his ear to the door panel. And as he did so I realized that he was no longer looking at me.

The moment I made that discovery I acted. I first tore the gag from my head. Then I jerked on the insulated wire which held the abandoned electric drill. And the result was most unexpected. For the moment I jerked the lights went out. Darkness enveloped me. I had scarcely time to realize that at some place this wire had been cunningly attached to the house circuit. In thus forcibly breaking it away I had ruptured the current feeding life to the shaded bulbs glowing about me.

I had, in fact, no time for thought, for at the same moment that I completed my maneuver by dropping flat on the floor, in case my enemy's little machine of death should bark out its leaden message at me, the library door was swung open.

Then the darkness was cut by a voice. It was a man's voice, clear-noted and authoritative, even while a little throaty with deliberately restrained excitement.

"Is anybody in this room?"

I knew the moment that question cut through the silence that it was William Obden-Belpont himself speaking. I knew, too, that Curate Sam must have slipped back from that door, or to one side of it. I remembered that he must be crouching there somewhere in the surrounding blackness, with his sawed-off revolver in his hand.

"Who is in here?" I heard the newcomer once more demanding. I could also hear his footsteps and knew he was groping along the wall for the useless light-switch. I felt sorry for him. I dimly resented his unfair helplessness, his pathetic ignorance of his peril. So I darted catlike across the room, carrying the steel

drill with its wires dragging after it. I was fully half-way across that room when I stopped short. For between me and the scarcely discernible oblong of gray which marked the position of the open door I could make out the vague outline of a man. It was a tall man, and a gaunt one. And I didn't need to see the misty silhouette of the blunt-nosed revolver in the outstretched hand to know it was Curate Sam. It was Curate Sam waiting to let that blunt-nosed thing deliver its quick message of death. And I knew that nothing would stop him once he had confirmed the quarter into which that message should be delivered.

So I breathed deep and tilted upward on my toes as I swung my mace on the end of its wires, as David once swung his sling. I was still holding my breath as I brought that swinging steel drill obliquely down on the tensely poised hand with its fingers clustered about the heavy revolver stock.

I could see the short stab of flame, spitting floorward, as the revolver went off. I don't remember hearing the shot, but I do remember hearing the relieving sound as the suddenly smitten firearm went rattling across the polished hardwood floor. The force of that swing of drill, however, carried me around in a circle. I had intended with a second swing to reach my enemy's body, to strike again before he could strike back. But that iron-weighted mace on the end of the wire slipped out of my grasp and wound, as a whiplash winds about a buggy-shaft, completely about Curate Sam's gaunt legs just below the knees.

At the same moment that he struck blindly at me, with that benumbed and bruised right hand of his, I had the presence of mind to jerk on the wire which still trailed through my fingers. That jerk sent him over like a nippin.

The fall must have stunned him a little, for I had the wire looped and twisted about his feet before he actually began to struggle again. It wasn't until I got his hands in chancery and wired his bony wrists tightly together, with another dozen loops of the insulated, that I noticed Obden-Belpont calling lustily for lights.

It was Evans the footman who answered that call. But before that wild-eyed and half-clad servant arrived with two tall candlesticks in his shaking hands I'd pawed about and recovered Curate Sam's fallen revolver with the sawed-off barrel. Then I went back to my captive.

Obden-Belpont took one of the tall candles and stooped over us.

"That man," he announced with a sort of child-like simplicity, "that man would have shot me."

"Of course, he would," I assented, as the ruffled old butler came wheezing into the room. "Here, Benchley," I said, as I held out the revolver to him, "guard this prisoner, for there's still another of the same breed somewhere in this house."

But my speech was cut short by the advent of Ferrie, a little crestfallen and a little out of breath.

"I thought I had him," he announced, "but the little beggar dropped from an upstairs window and ran for it!"

"Then we must get after him," I said as I started for the front of the house.

"It's no use," protested Ferrie, as he ducked out of sight. I stopped short and stared after him, for I'd got to the main hallway by this time, and this main hallway was fully lighted. Then I stared at something

else. Instead of watching Rear Admiral Trevor Ferris' vanishing dressing gown I stared at Winkie Ealand. I stared at him as he stood tied to the enameled iron rail where the stairway cascaded down to the ground floor. He stood in silence, for almost half a portiere seemed to have been crammed into his mouth as a gag. And close beside him was his adoring Miss Blanchan, in a severely plain long-sleeved nightgown that made her look like a cross between a scarecrow and a Carmelite abbess. She kept emitting faint and periodic bleats deep down in her throat, for two-thirds of a cashmere stocking had been wedged in between her large and equine teeth. And what made things much worse, I noticed that she was tied there with strips from Winkie's ridiculous old rose dressing gown.

Winkie himself was arrayed in nothing more than his pajamas. The attire of both of them, in fact, struck me as being shockingly intimate and shockingly inadequate, though neither of them, I imagine, was giving much thought to the matter. Seven wayward little devils of retaliation leaped up in me as I beheld them tied there side by side. I fixed poor Winkie with a cold and challenging stare.

"So that's the kind of a man you are?" I deliberately said to him, with as good an imitation of his own manner as I was able to manage. And I could see his writhe of disgust as he rolled his eyes from me to the bony lady on his right. But I had no time to explain or even to sympathize with him, for Ferrie, re-emerging from the darkness, caught me by the arm and hurried me on. He seemed to be having trouble with his breathing.

"I did it!" he announced in his strident stage whisper, as he stared back at the two prisoners. "I sent 'em down together! Told 'em there was a burglar somewhere in the house! And they rather seemed to have bumped into him, don't they?"

It didn't seem as funny to me as Ferrie expected. There were too many other things to think about.

"But the jewels," I reminded him. "You're sure they are safe?"

He stopped and stared at me.

"Safe? They're up in my room, of course," he retorted.

"You're certain of that?"

"Well, we can very soon make sure," he said. And off we scurried for his room, passing the still-wheezing Benchley on the way. The old butler tried to stop us, but there was too much at stake just then.

I followed Ferrie into his room. I saw him cross to the bed and throw his two big pillows aside. He stood there a second or two without moving. Then he turned to me.

"Good gad!" he gasped. "They're gone! I put 'em under my pillow here. I never—never dreamed any one would think of looking for 'em in such a place. Never dreamed it!"

"Begging your pardon, sir," ventured the baggy-eyed Benchley. "I be'ld that slip of fools there on your bed, and seeing there was burglars about, I took the liberty of 'iding them, sir, in the fire-box of the 'ouse furnace. And they're down there, sir, 'eaped over with clinkers, sir, as safe as though they was in the Bank of England. And I think it would be best if we didn't 'appen to waken Mrs. Obden-Belpont, as she's fair done out with what she's 'ad to go through today."

"You are quite right, Benchley," I said, as solemn as a judge.

(Copyright, 1919, by McClure Syndicate.)

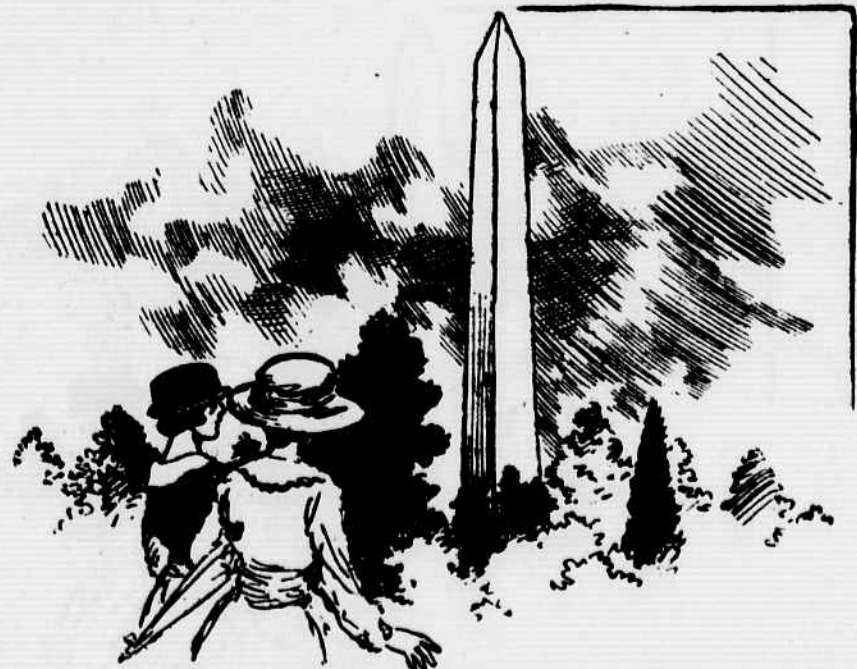
THE LETTERS OF PATRIOTIC POLLY, A WAR WORKER

THIS is the second of a series of letters written by a war worker in Washington to her father in California. Each letter tells a separate story, and the third will appear in the magazine of next Sunday's Star.

DADDY, Dear: Don't stop in the hall to read this, but go on in the dining room. That's a dear.

We didn't go to Mount Vernon Saturday afternoon, as I wrote that we were planning to. Being a half-holiday, we let every one else go. Nan had tried it at such a time and she said that the crowds ruined the atmosphere of the trip. When she went the people lined up on the front porch to go through the upstairs, and when one old lady stopped to drop a tear on the threshold of the room in which Washington died the tear had not even time to fall before the guide growled, "Move on, there!" And when she and some girls stopped to admire the counterpane on Nelly Custis' bed a man behind poked them with his umbrella and asked them "not to petrify, please."

By now, daddy, you should be just below the pictures of Great-grandfather and Grandmother Wayne, so seat yourself and look at them a long time, until you feel yourself drifting back to their days. Then anchor yourself so firmly that the present will not interrupt you, and continue with my letter. It's an echo of the seventies brought to you by the young



WE SHALL NEVER FORGET IT, EVEN THOUGH ALL THE REST OF THE CITY BE ERASED FROM OUR MINDS.

patriot of the twentieth century.

We took Friday off this week and went up to Arlington, on to Mount Vernon, and back by boat, back past all the old forts on the Potomac and the shipyards of Alexandria.

Arlington does not affect all people alike. Nan was a little indifferent toward it. Allie was furious—indignant. All her southern blood

boiled at the idea of turning the estate of the leader of the Confederates into a federal burying ground. She alternated between fits of desire to tear up the graves of the northern generals and strong resolves to be calm and submissive. When she came to that expressive monument erected to the few Confederates who lie there the poor child threw herself down on

the grass and sobbed like a baby. She refused to let Nan touch her, so I, being of neither the north nor the south, had to do the comforting.

Daddy, I loved the place, just loved it with a completeness and satisfaction that nothing else has aroused. It is so beautiful. Standing by the flag pole in front of the house and looking down the green slopes, at the broad driveways and the country on to the river, across which the Lincoln Memorial gleamed in the early morning sun, and the Monument lifting itself in proud stateliness, I knew that I could not anywhere, even in Europe, find a spot more beautiful. And second to that is the view of the big cream pillars, as you gaze at them from the other side of the Potomac. Encircled by the rich foliage, they are a constant reminder of the days that once were. But, when I look at them from that direction, I share some of Allie's sadness. It is not that their glory is faded, I don't exactly know what it is, unless it is that they seem to be always clinging to memories of things that seem farther and farther away as the days pass.

Mount Vernon, however, transports you bodily into the days of our first President. Everything else fades away and you forget that you are a person, you seem to be a spirit looking with modern eyes on the very existence of two hundred years ago. It is a lovely place, and it thrills Nan

as much as the Capitol did me when I first came; but somehow, daddy, I can't fit myself into it anywhere. I adore the old-fashioned garden of Mrs. Washington and the view of the river, and especially a tribute to the President that is hanging behind the back door of the big room. But I kept on feeling as though I were only a onlooker.

In fact, daddy, I did not get into communication with the soul of the man who was first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen until this morning, when we all went over to Alexandria and attended services in the old Christ Church.

We were ushered into Washington's pew. It was a quiet and peaceful Sabbath morning. The minister took his stand in the pulpit, that is elevated so that it gives him, as he stretches his hands out over the congregation, the appearance of a father blessing his children. Behind him the sunbeams came filtering in mellowed by the glass, and the leaves outside were making flickering shadows over him. I had to send up a little prayer in the middle of the sermon for the kind of days America used to have, the days in which there was time to develop strength and to build a foundation which would hold this madly rushing generation.

(Continued on Twelfth Page.)